



DC State Board of Education
Public Meeting on Teacher Evaluation Systems
Washington Teachers' Union President Nathan Saunders
Testimony
Wednesday, February 23, 2011

Good Evening Board President Trabue, Board Vice President Slover, and State Board of Education Members.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Washington Teachers' Union and its members on this incredibly important issue.

I would like to commence by stating that the current teacher evaluation system is ineffective. IMPACT and the value-added system on which it so heavily relies are simply means of implementing year-end staffing decisions. However, our focus should be on year-round professional development and improvement. This will allow us to provide the teachers who care so much for our children's welfare, the development they need and deserve so our public schools may flourish into a system where children are obtaining an integral aspect of their foundation by becoming solid citizens of our community.

Today's society has grown into one that is global in nature. However, it also continues to be one of haves and have-nots. In particular, Washington D.C. continues to be a city divided. One thing I believe we are united on though, is our love for our children. I don't think there is a parent out there who doesn't have the same hopes and dreams for their child. Each parent hopes for their son or daughter to grow into a healthy, active, strong individual, with a solid foundation in morals and education.

This foundation is currently broken and we find ourselves desperate to remodel a system that is neglecting a good portion of our youth. In order for our children, all our children, to be prepared to compete in this world, this foundation is essential.

This foundation is not simple. It is a complex network of inter-related support systems. It involves family, physical & mental health, diet & nutrition, socio-economic status, safety, and education. And these are just to name a few. If there is a death in the family, a child's foundation will be directly affected. Because these factors are inter-dependent, it is impossible to say that this child's education will not also be affected should he or she suffer such a loss.

In its current state, IMPACT ignores the inter-relatedness of these factors and assumes that only a teacher is responsible for a child's education. Studies show this to be completely untrue. Additionally, it sets up a system of distrust among teachers and administrators, creating a more hostile learning environment. Studies have shown that students have higher rates of success where there is healthy, open communication among teachers, administrators and staff. So, why

evaluate our educators under a system which offers little support or growth, and hampers the education of our children?

A more effective teacher evaluation system would be comprehensive such as the 5-part system proposed by my colleagues at the American Federation of Teachers.

It would include:

1. Professional Teaching Standards;
2. Teacher Practice Assessment;
3. Implementation Standards;
4. Professional Contexts Standards; and
5. Systems of Support.

By implementing a more complete system, we will be ensuring our teachers a more balanced and fair evaluation. In doing so, we will guarantee our children a stronger educational foundation on which to build their futures.

Thank you for your time. I welcome your questions after testimony from my colleagues at the American Federation of Teachers.

###

